

Mike Stachura: “The mark of a great church is not its seating capacity, but its sending capacity.”

O Loving and Gracious God, we lift our thanks and praise to you this beautiful morning. It is good to be here. We all come from different places in life, with different interests and talents, with different joys we have celebrated, different concerns that weigh upon us. And yet, we are one here together in you, seeking to understand and live out what it means to be the Body of Christ in this world. A world in which tweets, threats, insults, accusations, and blame are thrown around without any regard to your command to love others. A world in which self-centeredness is the norm, and you are all too often dismissed as irrelevant or non-existent. But we are here, believing, trusting and loving you, seeking to both worship you, and to be guided by you. We are thankful for this table of Christ that offers us forgiveness, grace and a new start. And help us, Lord, to remember, that it is not a table where we only receive – it is a table that reminds us that we are sent. For on that night when he celebrated this last supper with his disciples, Jesus prayed to you, “Just as you sent me into the world, so I am sending them into the world.” And Lord, we confess that sometimes we don’t want to be sent. We don’t want to give up our time or energy or money for others who might reject us, condemn us, or look down on us. We don’t want to go outside our comfort zone, into the unknown, where we might have to do things we don’t want to do, with people we don’t want to do it with. We would sometimes just rather stay right where we are, and think that somehow the “church” will spread your word. But we are the church, Lord. We are the Body of Christ. And we are sent. And I pray that this church, the John Wesley United Methodist Church will be a great church for you, with people willing and committed to be like the prophet Isaiah, and say, “Here I am, Lord, send me.”

And as we think upon this, as we seek to be forgiven and cleansed, we come to open ourselves to you. And so, now, in silence, we offer our own prayers of confession and petitions.

And Lord, we pray also for others. You have heard those on our prayer list, but hear us now as people in this congregation lift aloud the names for whom we ask your blessing...